

I oppose loosening the rules designed to promote and protect diversity of media ownership. These rules were adopted to ensure that the public would receive a diverse range of viewpoints from the media, and not simply the opinions of a handful of media conglomerates.

I urge you to take seriously your job of protecting the public trust. Under the FCC plans, one company in a community will be able to own a major newspaper, several TV and radio stations, the cable system, and the principal Internet access company. There will be fewer owners of networks, stations, and newspapers nationwide.

The media industry argues that there is more programming diversity than ever before, and surely, there are more choices in terms of the sheer number of outlets and programs. But this is not the same thing as "diversity." There is remarkable similarity in television and radio programming, which ill-serves as wide and varied a public as the United States'. Media unions such as AFTRA, WGA East and the Newspaper Guild-Communications Workers of America have issued a scathing critique of the dozen FCC studies you're using as a basis for review of media-ownership restrictions. Even a member of the advertising industry (MediaCom, the world's ninth-largest advertising agency and a unit of New York-based Grey Global Group Inc.) has said that further media consolidation will discourage innovative television programming.

I also urge you to schedule more public hearings to discuss how such proposals will affect my community and the nation. One public hearing in Richmond, VA is not enough to gauge public opinion on these proposals.

Thank you for your time and consideration.